

Mental Health Journey Guide for Veterans

A simple worksheet to help document daily life with a mental health condition and create stronger supporting evidence for a VA claim

Why this matters: A journal can help show VA what daily life is like living with your disability. It does not guarantee service connection, but it can help present a clearer and more accurate picture of your symptoms and how they affect work, relationships, memory, sleep, and day-to-day functioning.

How to use this guide

- Use this as a resource to help create your own journal, whether you keep it by pen and paper, on a blank Word document, or in another format that works for you.
- Try to write 2 to 4 entries each week, or more often during difficult periods.
- You do not need perfect grammar. Honest, specific examples are more helpful than polished writing.
- The more complete your journal is, the more accurately it can show the level of impairment you are dealing with.

What to include in each journal entry

Topic	What to write
Date	Write the date of the entry.
Symptoms	List the symptoms you had that day, such as depression, anxiety, panic, anger, irritability, memory problems, poor concentration, sleep problems, isolation, or low motivation.
What happened	Describe what happened in plain language. Write real examples from that day.
Impact	Explain how your symptoms affected work, family life, appointments, driving, hygiene, chores, concentration, sleep, or relationships.
Frequency	If a symptom happened more than once that day or happens often during the week, say that clearly.
Response	Note whether you took medication, went to therapy, isolated, needed support, or used coping skills.

Strong questions to help build a useful journal

- What symptoms did I have today?
- How often did those symptoms happen today or this week?
- What happened because of those symptoms?
- Did my symptoms make it hard to get out of bed, shower, eat, clean, drive, or finish normal tasks?
- Did I miss an appointment, forget something important, or avoid going somewhere?
- Did I have trouble focusing, remembering instructions, staying organized, or completing tasks?
- Did I isolate, argue, snap at someone, or withdraw from family or friends?
- How did my symptoms affect work, school, or my ability to handle stress?
- How did I sleep, and did poor sleep affect my next day?

Less is more: If writing everything feels overwhelming, focus on symptoms, what happened, and how it affected your day. That alone can still be very helpful.

Before you turn in your journal

- Use real examples, not just words like “bad,” “stressed,” or “not doing well.”
- Make sure the journal shows how symptoms affect daily life, work, family, concentration, memory, and sleep.
- Good days and bad days can both be included.
- If possible, bring your journal to appointments so it matches what you report in treatment.

Examples and a template you may use are on the following pages

Example journal entries

Example 1

Date	April 8, 2026
Symptoms	Depression, anxiety, irritability, poor sleep, memory problems
What happened	I slept only 3 to 4 hours and woke up several times. I forgot part of a conversation with my spouse and misplaced my keys. I became irritated quickly when asked simple questions and did not want to leave the house.
Impact on daily life	I had trouble concentrating, stayed isolated most of the day, and did not complete the tasks I planned. My mood affected my family because I was short-tempered and withdrawn.
Frequency	Poor sleep has been happening most nights this week. Irritability happened several times today.
Treatment or response	Took my medication and tried to rest, but still felt overwhelmed.

Example 2

Date	April 10, 2026
Symptoms	Anxiety, anger, memory problems, low motivation
What happened	I felt nervous most of the day for no clear reason. I snapped at my spouse, forgot an appointment, and misplaced my phone twice. I stayed in bed most of the afternoon and avoided talking to anyone.
Impact on daily life	I missed responsibilities, had trouble keeping track of daily tasks, and struggled to interact calmly with my family.
Frequency	This type of anxiety has been happening several days each week.
Treatment or response	I isolated and did not do much of anything that day.

Mental Health Journal Template

Use this page to begin your entries. You can duplicate it as needed.

Date

Symptoms

What happened

Impact on daily life

Frequency

Treatment or response

Date

Symptoms

What happened

Important note: This worksheet does not replace medical treatment. If you are in crisis or feel unsafe, contact emergency services, the Veterans Crisis Line, or your treatment provider right away.